

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 13024

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IN
SUBJECT: US-INDIA RELATIONS

SUMMARY: INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY, KEWAL SINGH, INVITED IN THE
AMBASSADOR SEPT. 27 AND MADE A QUIET APPEAL FOR IMPROVED INDO-US
RELATIONS. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE "POSITIVE"US PROPOSALS
AT THE SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION, WAS OPTIMISTIC REGARDING THE
JOINT COMMISSION MEETING, AND EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF US
ECONOMIC AND FOOD ASSISTANCE. HE SAW COMMON US-INDIAN INTERESTS
IN SOUTH ASIA AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD AS THE BASIS FOR
STEADY IMPROVEMENTS IN POLITICAL RELATIONS DESPITE PERIODIC
SETBACKS FROM "NAME CALLING." HE DID NOT RAISE ARMS SUPPLY.
THE AMBASSADOR WARNED KEWAL SINGH OF PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT
ARISE BECAUSE OF AMENDMENTS TO THE AID BILL,ALERTED HIM TO
WASHINGTON PRE-OCCUPATION WITH AREAS OTHER THAN SOUTH ASIA, AND
PROBED REGARDING INDIA'S VIEW CONCERNING BANGLADESH. THIS
CONVERSATION PRESENTS EXPLICIT CONFIRMATION THAT THE GOI
CONTINUES TO SEEK A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US DESPITE
THE RECENT EXCHANGE OVER PRESIDENT FORD'S COMMENT ABOUT THE
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EMERGENCY. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING AN INITIAL DISCUSSION ON THE KOREAN AND PUERTO RICAN ITEMS (SEPTELS), KEWAL SINGH TURNED TO TALK OF US-INDIAN RELATIONS AND KEPT REVERTING TO THE SUBJECT WHEN THE DISCUSSION WANDERED ELSEWHERE. RECALLING HIS BRIEF STAY IN NEW YORK DURING THE SEVENTH SPECIAL SESSION, HE SAID THAT HE HAD THOUGHT THAT THE UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES WANTED TWO THINGS FROM THE DEVELOPED WORLD: A COMMITMENT TO HELP; AND CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS. HE HAD FOUND THAT THE SECRETARY'S SPEECH HAD SPELLED OUT SUCH CONCRETE MEASURES; IT WAS VERY POSITIVE. REFERRING TO THE SECRETARY'S APPEAL FOR COOPERATION INSTEAD OF CONFRONTATION, KEWAL SINGH SAID THAT HE WANTED TO ASSURE US THAT AT LIMA, INDIA "BORE THE BIGGEST BRUNT FOR MODERATION." 80 PERCENT OF THE MOVEMENT TOWARD MODERATION IN LIMA DRAFTS WAS ACHIEVED BY THE INDIANS. THE RESULT WAS NOT GOOD, BUT THERE WAS SOME CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

3. KEWAL SINGH SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC IN "EVERY RESPECT" CONCERNING PROSPECTS FOR THE JOINT COMMISSION. THE AMBASSADOR SINGLED OUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE. KEWAL SINGH REPLIED THAT INDIA RECOGNIZED THE US WAS INDIA'S MOST IMPORTANT TRADING PARTNER. KEWAL SINGH WENT ON TO SAY HOW IMPORTANT US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE HAD BEEN TO INDIA OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES. HE PARTICULARLY SINGLED OUT LAST YEAR'S FOOD ASSISTANCE, WHICH HE CALLED "THE CRUCIAL ASPECT OF US ASSISTANCE." HE REMARKED THAT ON OCCASION INDIA AND THE US GET UNHAPPY WITH EACH OTHER AND ENGAGE IN NAME CALLING. IT IS FORGOTTEN HOW IMPORTANT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS. INDIA DOES NOT WANT TO DISRUPT THE STRONG LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT BOTH COUNTRIES WERE SENSITIVE AND THAT THERE WERE SETBACKS FROM TIME TO TIME BUT HE WAS MORE ENCOURAGED THAN DISCOURAGED BY CURRENT TRENDS. THE AMBASSADOR TOOK THE OCCASION TO MENTION HIS CONCERNS ABOUT THE AMENDMENT TO THE AID BILL (THE HARKIN AMENDMENT). HE SAID THAT WE DIDN'T WANT TO GO TOO FAR DOWN THE ROAD TOWARD A PROGRAM ONLY TO BE EMBARRASSED. HE HOPED TO FIND MORE OUT ABOUT THIS IN WASHINGTON. KEWAL SINGH SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT INDIA'S RECORD WOULD BE EXAMINED AS COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES. THE SITUATION IN INDIA WOULD IMPROVE FROM DAY TO DAY. INDIA'S LEADERS WERE DETERMINED THAT THERE WILL BE A RETURN TO NORMAL FUNCTIONING.

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4. TURNING TO POLITICAL RELATIONS, KEWAL SINGH EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE GOI ATTACHED TO THE POLITICAL TALKS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE TIME OF THE JOINT COMMISSION MEETING. THE GOI HOPED FOR A POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING WITH THE US--MUTUAL RESPECT--AS ALL OTHER THINGS HAD TO FLOW FROM THAT. FROM THERE WE COULD GO ON, SUBJECT TO OCCASIONAL SETBACKS,

BUT ON AN ASCENDING SCALE OF UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION. THE INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF INDIA AND THE US WERE THE SAME. THE US HAS DONE MUCH FOR WORLD PEACE. THE CHANGE IN US-SOVIET RELATIONS, BROUGHT ABOUT NOT THROUGH FEAR BUT THROUGH THE DESIRE FOR PEACEFUL COOPERATION AND ECONOMIC BETTERMENT, WAS A CASE IN POINT. THERE WAS NO REASON WHY THE US AND INDIA SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COOPERATE.

5. ASKING THE AMBASSADOR TO EXPLAIN TO WASHINGTON OFFICIALS HOW INDIA SEES THE SITUATION ON THE SUBCONTINENT, KEWAL SINGH SAID HE SAW NO REASON WHY THE US AND INDIA WOULD NOT SEE EYE TO EYE. BOTH NATIONS WANTED STABILITY IN THE AREA. INDIA DID NOT WANT TO THROW ITS WEIGHT AROUND IN ITS RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN. IN REGARD TO BANGLADESH, INDIA HAD PLEADED WITH THE PREVIOUS REGIME TO BE FRIENDLY WITH PAKISTAN SO THAT THE THREE NATIONS COULD LIVE IN FRIENDSHIP WITH EACH OTHER; IN ANSWER TO THE AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THAT THE GOI DID SEE AN INCREASE IN THE INFLUENCE OF PAKISTAN WITH THE NEW REGIME, BUT IF THIS LEADS TO GREATER UNDERSTANDING WITHOUT ENDANGERING PEACE, HE WOULD FAVOR IT. HE HOPED THAT THE NEW REGIME WOULD STABILIZE AND WORK FOR COOPERATION AMONG ALL THREE OF THE SOUTH ASIAN NATIONS. INDIA HAD ASSURED THE NEW GOVERNMENT THAT IT WANTED FRIENDLY RELATIONS. IT HAS ALSO MENTIONED HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR INDIA THAT THERE BE COMMUNAL HARMONY IN BANGLADESH AS ANY EXTENSIVE MIGRATION WOULD BE DISASTROUS. INDIA, HE SAID, HAD NO EVIDENCE THAT THERE WAS A COMMUNAL PROBLEM NOW.

6. SEVERAL OTHER SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED. OIL PRICES:
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KEWAL SINGH ADMITTED THAT INDIA COULD NOT TAKE PUBLIC ISSUE WITH THE OIL COUNTRIES FOR FEAR THAT PAKISTAN WOULD BE ABLE TO USE ITS PAN-ISLAMIC TIE AGAINST INDIA. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT PETROLEUM MINISTER MALAVIYA HAD NEVERTHELESS MADE A STATEMENT PUTTING THE BURDEN FOR OIL PRICES WHERE IT BELONGED. KEWAL SINGH EXPLAINED THAT IF THE PRICE OF PETROLEUM WENT UP 15 PERCENT (THE RESULT OF THE OPEC MEETINGS HAD NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED), INDIA WOULD HAVE TO PAY OUT AN EXTRA \$300 MILLION. LAST YEAR INDIA USED 80 PERCENT OF ITS EXPORT EARNINGS FOR OIL, FOOD AND DERTILIZER. FOOD: THE AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF PRICE TO AMERICAN PRODUCTION. KEWAL SINGH AGREED THAT A FAIR PRICE WAS IMPORTANT TO PRODUCTION BUT THERE SHOULD ALSO BE AN ASSURANCE OF SUPPLY AT A REASONABLE

PRICE TO THE NEEDY COUNTRIES. WASHINGTON CLIMATE:
THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED WASHINGTON'S PRE-OCCUPATION
WITH THINGS OTHER THAN SOUTH ASIA, PARTICULARLY THE
MIDDLE EAST. ARMS SALES: THE AMBASSADOR TOLD KEWAL
SINGH THAT THE PAKISTAN TIMES STORY WAS "PRETTY
FACTUAL" AND NOTED THE HIGH PROPORTION OF ITEMS WHICH
COULD HAVE BEEN PURCHASED UNDER THE OLD POLICY.
KEWAL SINGH SAID NOTHING ON THE SUBJECT.

7. COMMENT: THIS CONVERSATION CONFIRMS EXPLICITLY
EVIDENCE WE HAVE BEEN OBTAINING FROM OTHER MINISTRIES
THAT THE GOI CONTINUES ON ITS INITIATIVE FOR BETTER
RELATIONS DESPITE DIFFERENCES OVER PRESIDENT FORD'S
REMARKS ON THE EMERGENCY.
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